

Andrews University

## Digital Commons @ Andrews University

---

Faculty Publications

---

12-1-1961

### The Faith and Order Commission - Part 2

Earle Hilgert

*Andrews University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs>



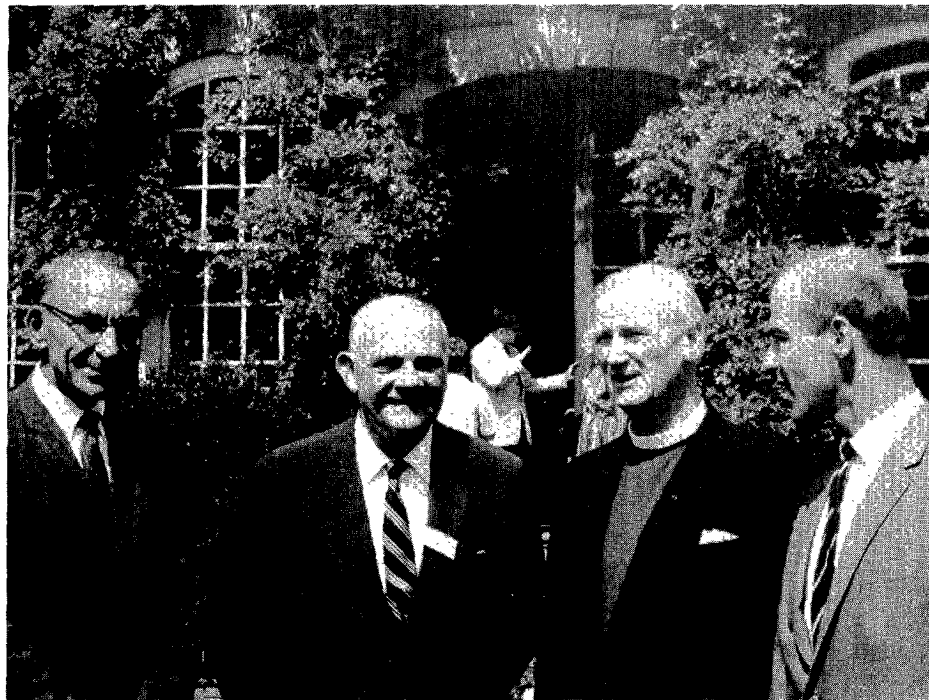
Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Hilgert, Earle, "The Faith and Order Commission - Part 2" (1961). *Faculty Publications*. 4036.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/pubs/4036>

This Popular Press is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact [repository@andrews.edu](mailto:repository@andrews.edu).



From left to right: Dr. Paul S. Minear, Yale University, president, Faith and Order Commission; Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, general secretary, World Council of Churches; Dr. Oliver S. Tomkins, Bishop of Bristol, chairman, Working Committee, Faith and Order Commission; Dr. Lukas Vischer, who is the director of the Faith and Order Commission.

wholeness of Christ's mission and His truth.

At the same time recognition was given to the fact that within the Faith and Order group a variety of deeply divided positions are found as to what constitutes catholicity in actual practice. In view especially of the differences in regard to the Lord's Supper, talk of "catholicity" in the church seems hollow. Faced with this seemingly irreconcilable division, the paper concluded that the only way to renewal is through repentance, and sees in the act of repentance itself a kind of unity both under God's judgment and his renewal in Christ.

#### "God in Nature and History"

The second main presentation, the paper on "God in Nature and History," traced the Biblical history of salvation from Creation to consummation, pointed up contrasts in the world views of the Bible and of modern man, and sought to spell out a Christian understanding of man's re-

#### *The Bristol Meeting of*

## *The Faith and Order Commission- 2*

By EARLE HILGERT

IT WAS against the background of its long history, and more particularly the developments since the Montreal Conference, that the Faith and Order Commission began its work on Sunday evening, July 30. Already that morning one of the deepest divisions that has always existed within the ecumenical movement had been dramatized when the members of the Commission had gone en masse to the local Greek Orthodox church. Both because of theological differences in the meaning of the Lord's Supper and of the doctrine of apostolic succession, according to which the Orthodox do not admit non-Orthodox to Communion, only a minority of those present were able to participate in this part of the service. However, at the end of the service, as a token of good will and brotherly love, unconsecrated bread was served to all who wished to participate in a symbolic meal. A further symbol of ecumenical feeling was indicated by the fact that the Anglican bishop of Bristol, a leader for many years in Faith and Order work, was invited to occupy the

bishop's throne in this Orthodox church.

As the Commission settled down to its work, a series of papers was laid before it for consideration and criticism. The two most important of these dealt with "The Holy Spirit and the Catholicity of the Church" and "God in Nature and History." The first paper was a continuation of studies on the nature of unity. Studies on this topic have occupied the Faith and Order movement virtually from its beginning. The document is intended to play a major role at the next general assembly of the World Council of Churches at Uppsala, Sweden, in 1968. Moving out from the New Delhi concept of the united church as "all in each place," this paper emphasized the need for greater attention to the church as a universal community. It discussed the concept of "catholicity" and asserted that the church is made catholic through the reception of life and truth in Christ, the communion of the Holy Spirit. This gift requires a response of obedience to fulfill the

relationship to the natural world, particularly in view of his sin and Christ's salvation. It concluded with the conviction that God, though seemingly hidden, is present in human history, and that all our interpretations of history must be built on Jesus Christ, who is the key to our understanding of history. In response to this paper the Commission called for the preparation of a parallel study on "Man in Nature and History," in which both theologians and behavioral and natural scientists would join to grapple with the challenges of these sciences to the Christian view of man. They would seek to answer such problems as the meaning of death and resurrection in the light of contemporary scientific developments in regard to the nature and control of life, and the question of the extent to which human nature is actually capable of change. Following the recommendations of the Montreal meeting, papers were also presented on methods of Biblical interpretation, on the church fathers, and on the ancient church councils, as well as on other topics.

Extensive discussion was given to the practical question of the development of the work of the Faith and Order Commission. In his opening address Dr. Lukas Vischer, the director of the Commission, reported on widening contacts both with Roman Catholics and with conservative Protestants. Since the Second Vatican Council a new spirit of openness has characterized many Catholic theologians to the point that they are eager for dialog and often for cooperation with such groups as the Faith and Order Commission. Dr. Vischer also mentioned informal conversations with Pentecostals and with Seventh-day Adventists. Of the latter contacts he told the Commission that they had "led to an illuminating discussion of the meaning of the fourth commandment."

A significant reaction of the Commission to these possibilities of wider contact was the adoption of a revision to its constitution, which raises its membership from a possible total of 120 to 150, with the understanding that the additional members are to be chosen from denominations that are not members of the World Council of Churches. As neither the Roman Catholic Church nor many of the more conservative Protestant denominations are members of the World Council, this action is of great significance for the widening of participation in its work from both these directions.

### Final Session

The high point of the meeting was reached in its final session on Tuesday afternoon, August 8, when Dr. O. S. Tomkins, the Bishop of Bristol and a leader in the movement ever since the meeting at Lund, gave the closing address on the future of the work of the Commission. He asserted that a new dimension is inevitable: Faith and Order must grapple with the problem of modern man in a world dominated by natural science, and seek to understand "the man in Christ" in that context. Speaking of the difficulties the ecumenical movement faces, he outlined three paradoxes: the toughness of institutions over against the fluidity of ideas; the fact that as the need for unity grows more obvious, so does the opposition to it; and the fact that the more the ecumenical movement as a whole becomes coherent, the more difficult it becomes to discern precisely what the purpose of the Faith and Order Movement within it should be. In the face of these perplexities he urged the Commission to continue its studies, and in closing reminded it of the incomparable importance of prayer.

What reactions can be registered to

the meeting on which we have reported above? One impression that stands out distinctly is the depth of the cleavage that continues among the major branches of Christianity. This was continually apparent in the discussions of the Commission—particularly on such issues as the Lord's Supper, the ministry, the nature of authority and of the church, and on other points as well. It was dramatized once more on the second Sunday at a Protestant Lord's Supper, when an Orthodox and an Eastern Christian bishop arose and walked out of the church before the bread and wine were given to the people. This was in no sense an act of disrespect, but an indication on their part of the impossibility of their participating in this service. In some respects fifty years of ecumenical conversations have done little to bridge the really crucial gaps between such major bodies as Eastern Orthodoxy and Protestantism.

A second fact, with which no Christian can fail to be impressed, is the seriousness and Christian commitment of the men engaged in this movement. The meetings were characterized by deep spirituality and earnest prayer that the Lord would bring about the unity of Christians. In his initial address Dr. Vischer, the director of the Commission, declared, "We must not only seek to understand and learn what praying means. We must seek to understand how the presence of God should be lived in a changed world, how Christ's name should be honored and praised. Perhaps the Faith and Order movement has its most important task today in this pastoral responsibility."

Along with other Christians, Seventh-day Adventists will be deeply interested in the meeting of the World Council at Uppsala, Sweden, next year, for which the Bristol meeting was a preparation.

(Concluded)

## A Bible Quiz

### Health and Temperance

1. The body is the temple of whom?
2. Give a guiding principle for the amount to be eaten.
3. Was Daniel an example of a temperate person?
4. To whose glory should the Christian eat?
5. In how many things should the Christian be temperate?

#### ANSWERS:

1. The Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:19). 2. Sufficient (Prov. 25:16). 3. Yes (Dan. 1:8). 4. God's (1 Cor. 10:31). 5. All things (1 Cor. 9:25).

## THE DEBILITATING REVOLT

(Continued from page 1)

sexual revolution. The panel's advocacy of the new morality, abandonment of the inviolability of the Ten Commandments, and permissive attitude toward dangerous, biblically condemned sexual practices further reveals the sickness in our society and in Christendom.

These theologians rightly point out the impersonalization of sex in the current rage of promiscuity and perversion, and call for responsibility and respect in sexual relationships. But they hold that responsible love may at times transgress biblical commandments against fornication, adultery, and homosexuality. For example, Martin Marty, associate editor of the *Christian Century*, hypothesized that the seduction of a certain older unmarried churchwoman might be a good thing "because perhaps then she would stop being so judgmental . . . and start being somebody." . . .

Panel participants viewed adultery as legitimate in certain circumstances. Harvard Divinity School's Harvey Cox considered it acceptable in a situation in which one of the spouses was institutionalized or incapacitated, providing "some kind of understanding" with the spouse was worked out. Martin Marty believed it permissible in what might be called the "Tea and Sympathy" context (in Robert Anderson's play, the wife of a headmaster in a boy's school has an affair with a boy falsely accused of homosexuality to convince him of his virility).

The panel said that homosexuality between consenting adults in private should be allowed. Union Seminary's Robert Wood Lynn stated, "Frankly, I don't think we really know whether homosexuality is a psychological condition or just another kind of normality, and any dogmatism here is decidedly premature. We should listen far more seriously to homosexuals than we have before."

Although these new-morality proponents assert their loving concern for people, their moralistic theories in reality work against the welfare and happiness of those they desire to help. By saying that divine commandments on sexual behavior are not absolute, they encourage disobedience of God. By leading people to rationalize sinful acts on the pretext of an undefined "love," they contribute to the deepening of degradation in society.

The Christian ethic is based on